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ALGERIA:

Results of Citizens Responses to Opinion Poll

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Results of Citizens' Responses to Opinion Poll

[Article by Mohammed Larbi, Nadia Bouzeghrane, M. Ainouche, O. Khiar, Omar Berbiche, Ahmed Ancer, and Reda Bekkai: "What do Algerians Want?"; first paragraph is EL WATAN introduction]

[Text] While being perceived as misunderstood, Algerians also remain genuinely unknown to some. Has a portrait of the average Algerian ever been drawn, and has he ever been asked exactly what he wants? We already know that he is interested in politics, but perhaps not overly so, since he is still preoccupied with more down-to-earth problems—the ones he faces in his daily life.

Algerians are ready to return to the ballot box, but not right away. They are also in favor of democracy, but are opposed to the experience since 1989.

Those are the lessons one can learn from the EL WATAN poll on Algerians and democracy. And they are not the only ones, since the 1,150 respondents constituting a representative sample of the Algerian population gave sometimes disconcerting answers to the questions put to them.

It is true that polling is a new and even unprecedented practice in Algeria despite the surveys conducted by certain specialized organizations. But unlike a census, this poll on a reduced scale is based on universally tested techniques such as the quota method that guided our poll. And like all the others, this poll is a photograph or at least a snapshot of a specific situation in time, but one which must necessarily take into account a certain number of parameters in order to be as faithful to reality as possible. EL WATAN, which complied with all those criteria, decided to take the plunge, with results that are sometimes surprising and sometimes in line with certain analyses.

For example, Algerians, who are discovering terrorism and the full horror of murder attempts, are much more concerned about their daily problems: unemployment, housing, corruption, and the high cost of living. The ranking of the answers should be noted, because the restoration of law and order ranks only fifth among the priorities. Only sociological analysis can explain such a choice. There are others, an example being resumption of the election process, but not for a few more years. Why such reservations when people are more concerned with more down-to-earth problems that contrast sharply with the official talk we have heard since the election process was suspended and the state of emergency introduced? The explanation—and here we can say that perhaps the Algerians have been convinced by that same official talk—may be their rejection by a large margin (over 50 percent) of the experience with the multiparty system that has been underway since 1989. That enables those polled to outline to some extent the kind of future that many of them think is going to be better, as opposed to certain analyses predicting an uncertain future.

Those responses may give rise to new questions, among them the question of what motivated the answers as given: peasant common sense, the age of those interviewed, or their level of education? Maybe all those things combined, considering the

Algerian sociodemographic component, which also made it possible, through this poll, to reconstruct a voter file showing that as of now (8 November 1992), there are an estimated 11,849,599 Algerians of voting age. The poll does not stop with those generalities, since it also includes more refined statistics.

Aspirations and Expectations

EL WATAN has just initiated a poll, which it hopes will contribute to a better understanding of the country's sociopolitical situation, especially since the suspension of the election process, and of the concerns, aspirations, and expectations of Algerians. Against the background of a major national event—the voting on 26 December 1991—EL WATAN's editorial staff tried to comprehend the attitudes, judgments, and convictions of Algerians concerning a certain number of political issues and issues of national interest, taking care to get as close as possible to reality from the standpoint not only of its diversity, complexity, and contradictions, but also of its richness while being as careful as possible not to subject it to bias, distortion, or misrepresentation.

That project, not to say that objective, may seem ambitious or even pretentious.

With the cooperation of Okba Khiar, a consultant on statistical surveys; Mustapha Ainouche, an expert on the processing of statistical surveys; and N. Hammouda, a research statistician, EL WATAN designed and carried out a poll comprising a sample of 1,150 individuals representative of the Algerian population 18 years of age or older and chosen by the quota method (sex, age, level of education, and socioprofessional category). The poll was conducted by eight interviewers and two supervisors between 21 October and 8 November 1992 in urban and rural areas in the following governorates: Alger, Boumerdes, Tipaza, Blida, M'Sila, Bordj Bou-Arreridj, Setif, Biskra, Batna, Khencela, Tebessa, Oum el-Bouaghi, Constantine, Mila, Djelfa, Laghouat, Mascara, Oran, Tlemcen, Ain Temouchent, Mostaganem, Relizane, Chlef, Tizi-Ouzou, and Bejaia.

Those governorates, grouped into five major strata (abstention, the former FIS [Islamic Salvation Front], the FFS [Socialist Forces Front], the undecided vote, and the FLN [National Liberation Front]), were not chosen at random; they match the major groups revealed by the election results on 26 December 1991. Governorates in which a majority of the electoral districts were not won by any political party were placed in the "undecided" stratum. Governorates where less than 50 percent of the voters cast ballots are included in the "abstention" stratum.

Governorates where a political party won are included in the stratum for that party.

Apart from questions concerned with their sociodemographic situation and identification (age, sex, occupation, level of education, and marital status), the 1,150 individuals polled (all anonymously) had to answer 11 questions as follows: "Did you vote on 26 December 1991?"; "If you did not vote, why not?"; "Are you for or against suspension of the election process or for its continuation?"; "Are you in

favor of a new election process?"; "What do you think of the multiparty system in Algeria?"; "Do you think that the election process helps to improve the situation, complicate the situation, or results in no change?"; "If a new election process is started, which group would you like to see win: democratic, Islamic, or other (specify)?"; "Among the following measures, are there any that you would like to see implemented rapidly: the fight against unemployment; a solution to the housing problem; education and culture; the fight against corruption; the fight against inflation; and the restoration of law and order?"; "How do you see the country's future: better, uncertain, or with no future?"; and "Will you vote in the next elections?"

A quick reading of a few poll results—they will be exhaustively dealt with later, question by question—shows that 30.6 percent of those polled did not vote on 26 December 1991. The main reason given to explain their nonparticipation in the election was that they had not received their voter registration cards.

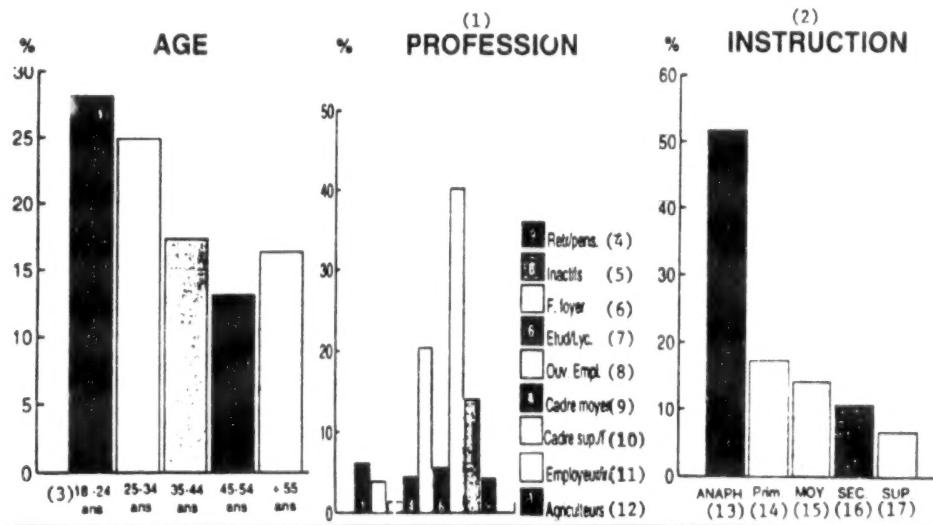
Concerning the suspension of the balloting, 38.6 percent said they approved, 33.3 percent said they did not approve, and 28.2 percent did not answer the question.

Other data: 50.3 percent are opposed to the multiparty experience as it has developed in Algeria, while 18.6 percent consider it a necessity. But 50.2 percent would favor a democratic faction, and 27.4 percent would prefer an Islamic faction. In addition, 78.1 percent will vote in the next elections, while 10.4 percent will not. The remaining percentage did not answer.

And 20.6 percent want new elections right away, 22.5 percent do not express an opinion, 8 percent want elections in one or two years, and 27.8 percent want them more than two years from now, while 8 percent do not want new elections, and 12.9 percent want the suspended election process to be resumed. Of those polled, 47.6 percent see a better future for the country, and 31.5 percent say it is uncertain. On the question of priorities, 81 percent of those polled mentioned unemployment, 60.7 percent housing, 53.5 percent corruption, 45.4 percent inflation, 36.3 percent the restoration of law and order, and 24 percent education and culture. Several answers to this question were allowed, with the result that people chose more than one response. Those are a few crude results.

Like any statistical survey, the poll we conducted has limits and margins of error. Other questions could have been asked. We did not ask them because we did not want to make the poll unwieldy and overextend ourselves. The sample could also have included parameters other than those we chose, and the strata could have varied as well. The fact remains that measuring public opinion on a given topic is not an easy exercise, the reason being that opinion can change. But the work we did, while needing to be developed more fully and refined, satisfies the reliable scientific criteria that must be met by a statistical survey of any kind. It can provide basic material for use by researchers, political analysts, or sociologists, for example. Last, it sheds light on the opinions, convictions, and aspirations of Algerians with respect to given subjects at a given moment.

Sample Polled



Key:

1. Occupation
2. Level of education
3. Age in years
4. Retired/pensioners
5. Inactive
6. Housewives
7. University/secondary students
8. Hourly or salaried employees

9. Midlevel executives
10. Senior executives/liberal professions
11. Employers or self-employed
12. Farmers
13. Illiterate
14. Primary school
15. Middle school
16. Secondary school
17. Higher education

Specific Criteria

The value of this poll is that it provides as accurate a photograph as possible of the behavior and reactions of Algerians at a given moment in response to past and future elections, the purpose being to bring out major trends and in some cases explain the details involved.

This poll should constitute a barometer of Algerian political attitudes, although it has its limits, and at the very least, it ought to shed light on reactions by Algerians to the confrontations that have kept political life at a high pitch since the suspension of the election process and even before that.

The basis chosen for the poll (and we thank statistician and researcher Hammouda for his help in drawing up the plan for the poll) consists of the entire population aged 18 years or over.

The sample consists of 1,150 individuals representative of the population aged 18 years or over in 1992, using the quota method (sex, age, level of education, and socioprofessional category), and stratified according to the major political factions arising from the latest election results (26 December 1991).

Stratification consisted of polling a population that is heterogeneous by nature and divided into several mutually exclusive subpopulations.

Since each of the latter is assumed to be as homogeneous an entity as possible based on the results of the last election, that is the basis of stratification, which consisted of dividing the governorates into five major strata, with each governorate being placed in a given stratum if the majority of its electoral districts (over 50 percent) were won by a particular political party, or in an "abstention" stratum if fewer than 50 percent of its inhabitants voted, or, lastly, in the "undecided" stratum if no party won in a majority of its electoral districts.

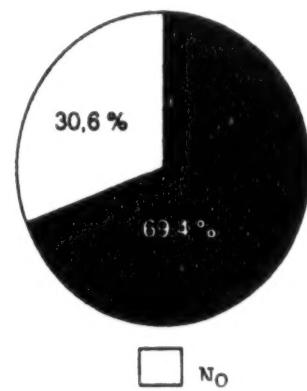
The poll was conducted from 21 October 1992 to 8 November 1992 in urban and rural areas of the following governorates: Alger, Boumerdes, Tipaza, Blida, M'Sila, Bordj Bou-Arreridj, Setif, Biskra, Batna, Khencela, Tebessa, Oum el-Bouaghi, Constantine, Mila, Djelfa, Laghouat, Mascara, Oran, Tlemcen, Ain Temouchent, Mostaganem, Relizane, Chlef, Tizi-Ouzou, and Bejaia.

Governorates not mentioned above are represented by governorates that are similar to them from the standpoint of stratification. To conduct this poll, we used the services of eight interviewers (all experienced in statistical surveys) directed by two supervisors. This measurement of public opinion in a given field, especially a political one, is a first in Algeria, and it constitutes a new field for researchers, one in which subsequent consideration of other characteristics should enrich and round out this unexploited mine.

Abstention: A Choice and Fears

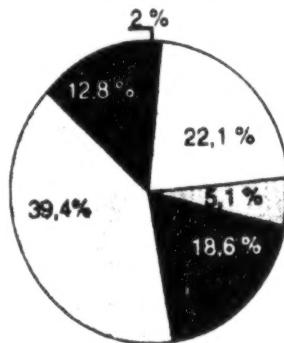
A large portion of the population refuses to get involved politically. That choice is called abstention, and it not only weakens the credibility of an election but may turn a minority into a real majority.

Did you vote on
26 December 1991?



No
 Yes

Why did you
not vote?



- No national identification card
- No voter registration card
- Not interested in voting
- Candidates not credible
- Other reasons
- No answer

What is the explanation for the high official rate of abstention (41 percent) during the elections of 26 December 1991—that nonparticipation in the elections? What were the reasons for such a high abstention rate, and what characterizes the population in question?

Answering that question was one of the things EL WATAN was seeking to do when it produced a questionnaire enabling each person to express his or her attitude toward the past and future election process.

At his press conference on 29 December 1991 concerning the extent of the abstentions, the minister of interior provided a partial explanation, saying that "900,000 voter registration cards were not distributed." Does that fact alone provide the explanation? Actually, only the results of this poll made it possible for us to define more closely, or at least to approach, the causes and the characteristics of that population and to draw up a very significant table.

The table below indicates quite specifically the reasons for those abstentions.

Reason	Men		Women		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
No voter card	479,567	13.2	947,914	26.1	1,427,481	39.3
No ID card	21,219	6.0	442,842	12.2	464,062	12.8
Not interested	389,022	10.7	2,85,781	7.9	674,803	18.6
Candidates not credible	127,316	3.5	59,419	1.6	186,735	5.1
Other reasons	275,852	7.6	527,720	14.5	803,571	22.1
No answer	35,366	1.0	38,199	1.1	73,565	2.0
Total		36.6		63.4		100.0

1. One out of two Algerians did not go to the polls either because he lacked a voter registration card (39.3 percent) or because he did not possess an identification card (12.8 percent).

2. One out of five Algerians (18.6 percent) said that voting did not interest him.

3. One out of five Algerians (22 percent) did not vote for some other reason (under voting age on 26 December 1991, illness, or some other preventing factor).

4. One out of 20 Algerians felt that the candidates were not credible, and, last, 2 percent did not answer the question.

In terms of sex, women make up almost two-thirds (63.6 percent) of this group. By age, most of those not voting are young people, since two out of three Algerians are under 34 years of age, and almost half (45 percent) are under 24 years of age.

By occupational category—excluding housewives, who account for over half the sample—we find that 16 percent are inactive, followed by hourly and salaried employees at 9.9 percent, university and secondary students at 7 percent, and, lastly, all others combined at 13.1 percent.

As regards their level of education, illiterates make up half the group (49.1 percent), followed by those with a middle-school education (18.9 percent), while 13.6 percent have a secondary education, and 12 percent have a university education.

What conclusions—at least preliminary conclusions—can we draw from this first reading?

First, there is the obvious failure on the part of the administrative apparatus, as evidenced by the fact that over half of those abstaining did so because they lacked either a voter registration card or a national identification card. Even though part of the responsibility for that rests with the citizens themselves, we can say that there are extenuating circumstances, considering that more than half are illiterate.

How can one characterize a government department that has failed in its duty and thereby prevented over half of that group (the abstention group) from going to the polls? The characterization once made by the weekly JEUNE AFRIQUE with reference to a certain government department (similar to ours) seems to serve the purpose best: a stairway where those arriving late and those leaving early pass each other.

The second conclusion is that one out of five Algerians is not interested. A political campaign that was lively, sustained, and crucial to the country's future did not suffice to convince people of the usefulness of the ballot box. What one can see in that is the expression of disaffection with a system that has not been able to think ahead.

Multiparty System

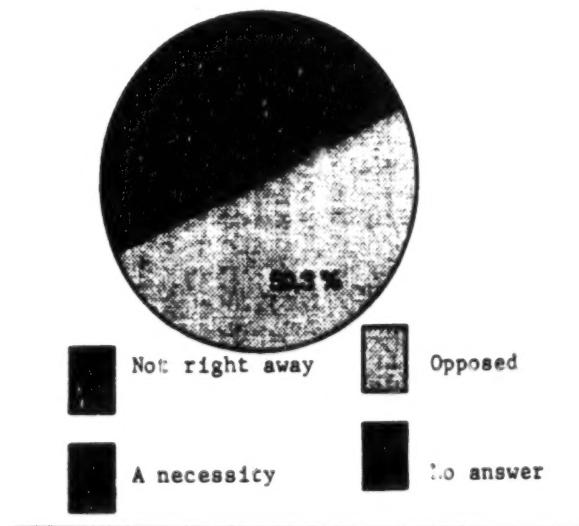
The question: What do you think of the multiparty system as experienced in Algeria?

The democratic experience in Algeria is interpreted by the citizens in varying ways. In the face of the peril and instability threatening the country, with all the risks of violence one might fear as a result, one occasionally hears well-thought-out or knee-jerk reactions questioning the very appropriateness of the democratic choice made in Algeria.

Even within the ranks of what are called "the democrats," there are those who, in these difficult circumstances being experienced by the country, are wondering whether, to borrow a timeworn phrase, "Algeria is ready for democracy."

Obviously, that would be an affront to history and the sacrifices made to impose democratic choices which, beyond the inadequacies and deviations noted in the face of events, at least have the merit of existing and of presenting themselves as unavoidable reality.

What do you think of the
multiparty system in Algeria?



What do you think of the multiparty system?

Answer	Men		Women		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
A necessity	1,618,339	13.7	591,378	5.0	2,209,717	18.7
In favor, but not right away	1,138,772	9.6	425,839	3.6	1,564,611	13.2
Opposed	2,704,766	22.8	3,248,361	27.4	5,953,127	50.2
No answer	572,923	4.8	1,549,222	13.1	2,122,144	17.9
Total	6,034,800	50.9	5,814,799	49.1	11,849,599	100.0

Political life has flourished since passage of the law on political parties, which led to the emergence of a multitude of parties. Except for the brief interval surrounding 26 December 1991, however, the lack of elections has meant that those parties have been unable to prove the size of their audience in society.

In any case, the experience with the multiparty system as implemented in Algeria, with its successes and its failures, is rejected by more than half of all Algerians (50.2 percent, consisting of 22.8 percent men and 27.4 percent women).

Does this mean that Algerians are nostalgic for the single party?

There is no reason to think so. Analysis of the other answers makes it possible to relativize that statement,

which in fact would benefit from being set in a different context allowing one to see the hidden meaning behind the obvious sense of the message. In all likelihood—and other poll results reinforce this theory—it is not so much democracy or the multiparty system as such that is considered questionable. Rather, what a good share of the sample seems to object to is the way in which democratic reforms have been implemented.

That negative response is tempered by other, rather subtle statements revealing the differentiated attitudes of Algerians toward that issue: 18.6 percent of them feel that "the multiparty system is a necessity," and 13.2 percent say they are "in favor, but not right away."

The percentage failing to answer remains relatively high: 17.9 percent represent what is commonly called the

silent majority, although at least in this case, it seems to be more of a minority. At any rate, those answers refute or at least relativize the statement that Algerians are not interested in politics.

Analysis of the responses to this question in terms of the educational level of those polled leads to conclusions that are predictable to say the least, considering that the structure of Algerian society is strongly marked by a high rate of illiteracy: it is estimated, according to recent statistics, that over 7 million Algerians are illiterate.

That sociological fact shows up clearly in the poll results. Of the 50.2 percent expressing their opposition to the experience with the multiparty system for reasons which the poll did not go into but which would be worth investigating in future surveys, the illiterates are the most numerous (26.8 percent of the negative responses). Not surprisingly, senior executives are the smallest group in this case, accounting for 1.7 percent of the responses by people opposed to the multiparty system.

How should such a result be interpreted? The first explanation probably has to do with the low level of political culture characterizing Algerian society—the logical consequence of the country's cultural development. It is difficult for an illiterate to gage the importance of the multiparty system and democracy in the development of society.

It is very probable that the country's painful experience in this area, with all the excesses that have occurred, has had the worst possible effect on some Algerians, who seem not to have found the democratic process attractive for reasons, which have been partially explained but that need to be subjected to a closer analysis that will take into account all the data related to the problem.

By occupation, it is the housewives who are in first place when it comes to disapproving of the experience with the multiparty system (22.1 percent), followed at a very great distance by hourly and salaried employees (9.3 percent) and the inactive (8.5 percent). Senior executives and the liberal professions are in last place at 0.2 percent.

Conclusion:

The responses to this question point up two variables from which researchers will have to draw inferences: the first has to do—completely unexpectedly—with the high

percentage of people rejecting the experience with the multiparty system, a system identified in many people's minds with anarchy, instability, and all the other dysfunctions it has led to in the functioning of society.

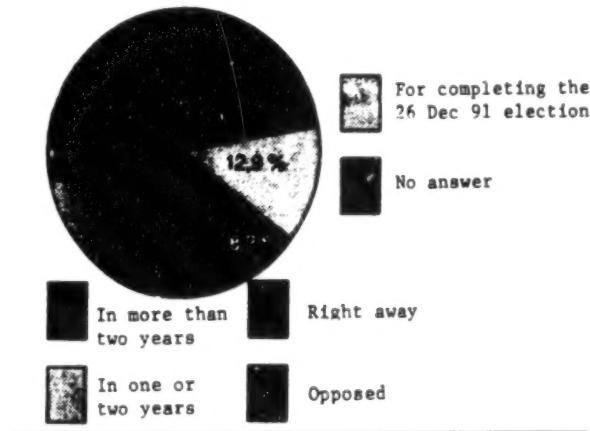
Another finding: it is not executives, workers, or students who form the bulk of the troops opposing the multiparty system—which is what could have been expected—but rather the housewives.

It is true that proportionately, housewives form a larger group than the other socioprofessional categories selected for the poll, but the fact remains that that circumstance is far from being the explanation. The level of political awareness and amount of discussion within the broadest social categories regarding the extent of the political changes occurring in the country are not unrelated to such a result.

Elections: Yes, But...

Since independence, Algerians have grown accustomed to going to the polls to elect local or national institutions and even their representatives in the firms. The tradition having been established, it seems difficult to depart from it. And to some extent, the responses to the question "Are you in favor of a new election process?" (see the table below) reflect that tendency, including even the abstention group when one considers that that latter is part of the same "no opinion" group that exists in every poll.

Do you favor a new election?



Are you in favor of another election?

Answer	Men		Women		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Yes, right away	1,205,264	10.2	1,232,290	10.4	2,437,555	20.6
Yes, in one or two years	693,166	5.8	258,895	2.2	952,060	8.0
Yes, in more than two years	1,605,598	13.5	1,686,422	14.3	3,292,020	27.8
Not in favor	587,069	5.0	381,995	3.2	969,064	8.2
In favor of completing the election of 26 Dec 91	1,066,636	9.0	466,872	3.9	1,533,508	12.9
No answer	877,067	7.4	1,788,325	15.1	2,665,392	22.5
Total		50.9		49.1		100.0

That being the case, the range of responses concerning the continued holding of elections itself reflects a number of concerns linked either to the current situation or simply to social problems that end up taking precedence over all other considerations. In that respect, the number of individuals (27.8 percent plus 8 percent for a total of 35.8 percent) opposed to the holding of elections in the immediate future is quite significant in terms of the total number answering "yes" (69.3 percent), seeing that what underlies it, in one way or another, is a number of considerations as shown in the responses to the question on Algerian concerns (see the table on that subject).

Among those responding to the questions asked are the 20.6 percent who want elections right away. What does this indicate? That the political landscape as it currently exists must be taken into account? The question needs to be asked, all the more since next in line after that group—although with a relatively large gap in between—come the 12.9 percent hoping for a resumption of the election process begun on 26 December 1991—that is, they want to go on to the second round of balloting.

Before we get to those with "no opinion," 8.2 percent say they oppose all elections, whether held right away or more than two years from now. Exactly what does that mean? In this game of suppositions—since the poll does not reveal the political affinities of the people polled—several theories are possible. Does opposition to elections reflect a stand taken long ago or is it linked to the democratic experience since 1988? Incidentally, of all the questions put to the interviewees, this was the one yielding the largest percentage of respondents with "no opinion" (22.5 percent). Who are they, and what causes them to remain silent? Obviously, there is the fact that polls are not yet part of our traditions, meaning that there is some distrust behind the various responses. At least there remains a wait-and-see attitude in the face of a situation often described as uncertain, even when a question on that subject is asked in specific terms and the response is entirely optimistic. At the same time, it can be said that Algerians are still receptive to statements by the country's highest authorities and agree with them, notably on the subject of the postponed elections. On that issue, 35.8 percent of them agreed with the inevitable official thesis that time was needed for consolidation and to reclaim the much-discussed "no opinion" group, which, after all, totals nearly 25 percent of all Algerians—a sizable group. That same question can also

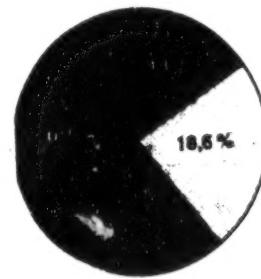
be interpreted to mean that the desired delay (a year or more) should be utilized to straighten out a very touchy situation and lay new foundations for the electoral game.

That opinion is more or less confirmed by the responses to the next question, in which a clear majority (43.4 percent) feels that elections help improve the situation, compared to 16.8 percent feeling the opposite (that is, that elections complicate the situation). Between those two groups are the 23.9 percent saying that elections bring no change (including the 8.2 percent who said they opposed elections in response to the question on that subject).

Are we to think that the latter like the status quo and prefer another path? Or should they be grouped together with the 16.8 percent fearing complications? In terms of age groups, however, that theory seems unlikely, considering that more than half (22.9 percent) of those in favor of elections are voting for the first time or, generally speaking, are young people (between 18 and 34 years of age).

It can therefore be deduced that as far as that group is concerned, change must come through elections.

Do you think that voting helps to:



Improve the situation

Complicate the situation

No change

No answer

Do you think that elections can...?

Answer	Men		Women		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Improve the situation	2,976,378	25.1	2,171,703	18.3	5,148,081	43.4
Complicate the situation	1,068,041	9.0	925,266	7.8	1,993,307	16.8
Bring no change at all	1,226,484	10.4	1,601,544	13.5	2,828,028	23.9
No answer	763,897	6.4	1,116,287	9.5	1,880,184	15.8
Total	6,034,800	50.9	5,814,799	49.1	11,849,599	100.0

Voters and Others

According to the poll results, 11,849,599 voters were called on to participate in the legislative elections of 26 December 1991. A comment is called for on this first point: the voter lists for 26 December reported over 13 million voters. Two main reasons can be mentioned to

explain the gap between the figures in the poll and those announced by the Ministry of Interior. The first has to do with the reliability of the polls themselves, since they always include a margin of error. The second reason is found perhaps in the lists themselves. It seems that a great many citizens were registered on at least two lists, or even, quite frequently, on several.

Did you vote on 26 December 1991?

Answer	Men		Women		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Yes	4,727,678	39.9	3,495,943	29.5	8,223,621	69.4
No	1,307,122	11.0	2,318,856	19.6	3,625,978	30.6
Total	6,034,800	50.9	5,814,799	49.1	11,849,599	100.0

Of those voters, 50.9 percent were men and 49.1 percent were women—a natural balance quite close to reality. The situation seems less natural, or rather less normal, when we examine the level of education in the population of voting age. More than half is still illiterate (51.9 percent—that is, 6,125,808 individuals cannot read or write). The implications from the standpoint of political attitudes and choices are important, not to say crucial.

That is not all. After the illiterates, voters with only a primary education are the largest group (2,040,008 individuals, or 17.2 percent of all voters). It is common knowledge that learning at the primary level can be regressive. An unlettered person is a potential illiterate.

Many phenomena have been observed during Algerian elections, including those in recent years. For example, some voters have handed their voter documents over to their minor children, to family members, or even to people with whom they had nothing in common politically or ideologically. As a result of illiteracy and functional illiteracy, the number of "real" voters may actually be less than the number registered because those who vote and those who really express themselves are not necessarily the same people.

The literate population with educational levels ranging from middle school to university accounts for only 31.2 percent of all registered voters and is broken down as follows: middle school: 1,653,774 (14 percent); secondary education: 1,251,965 (10.6 percent); and higher education: 778,048 (6.6 percent). Not all registered voters went to the polls on 26 December 1991. Those who did vote numbered

8,223,621, or 69.4 percent, with the following breakdown by sex: 4,727,678 men (39.9 percent of all registered voters) and 3,495,943 women (29.5 percent of all registered voters).

The reasons for such a high "abstention" rate (30.6 percent, or 3,625,978 voters) in such an exceptional political period are known, and they combine with the role played in society by women. Nonvoters are divided as follows: 1,307,122 men (11 percent of registered voters) and 2,318,856 women (19.6 percent of registered voters, but over 60 percent of registered women voters).

By educational level, the abstainers were recruited primarily from among the illiterate (1,815,166, or 15.3 percent of registered voters), but also from among individuals with a primary education (434,317, or 3.7 percent) and those with a middle-school education (677,660, or 5.7 percent), a secondary education (486,640, or 4.1 percent), and a higher education (212,194, or 1.8 percent). It should be noted that while abstention by illiterates is the most sizable in absolute terms, the same is not necessarily true when the abstention rate in each group is calculated as a percentage of the total number of individuals at that particular educational level.

Participation and abstention in terms of voters' occupations also deserve special attention. For example, the poll shows us that relatively speaking, farmers, hourly and salaried employees, and independent employers voted in larger numbers than other occupational groups.

Question: Are you for or against the suspension of voting?

It is known that part of the population wanted the voting on 26 December to be suspended and that another part fiercely opposed such suspension. It is obvious that the responses to this question would have yielded different results if Algerians had been called upon to answer it before 26 December or between the

two rounds of balloting. In the interval, and following Chadli Bendjedid's forced resignation as president of the republic, many things have happened in the political arena to influence matters in one direction or the other and especially to affect the way Algerians view that arena.

Are you for or against the suspension of voting?



■ Against
■ For
■ No answer

Are you for or against the suspension of voting?

Answer	Men		Women		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
For	2,407,695	20.3	2,161,796	18.3	4,569,490	38.6
Against	2,223,793	18.8	1,717,548	14.5	3,941,342	33.3
No answer	1,403,312	11.8	1,935,456	16.3	3,338,767	28.1
Total	6,034,800	50.9	5,814,799	49.1	11,849,599	100.0

To begin with, one must consider the effect of terrorist activities on political attitudes. The barbarity of the attack on the airport must have been enough in itself to provoke a very thorough revision of such attitudes. The unreasoning assassinations of police officers, gendarmes, soldiers, and civilians have also opened the eyes of many citizens to the reality of the Islamic movement.

Bomb attacks and bomb alerts do not choose or spare their victims, many of whom are even Islamic sympathizers. Following an injury or moments of anguish, the friendly feelings an individual may have for a political movement can turn into the opposite.

Boudiaf's brief time in power also left its mark. Under him, Algerians had serious hopes of seeing the country pull through without too much damage. He succeeded in rekindling confidence.

It is perhaps for those reasons and certainly for others as well that the poll yields results which, when all is said

and done, are quite surprising considering the short time that has passed since the election process was suspended: 38.5 percent of Algerians approve of that suspension.

Apparently, there has been a reversal of opinion in the knowledge that the suspension in question was condemned and rejected by the Islamic movement in its entirety (FIS, Hamas, Ennahdha, and other small parties claiming to be Islamic) and by the other two winners in the first round (the FFS and the FLN)—that is, a total of over 5.5 million votes.

Are we seeing a reshaping of the political field? Is Algeria in a phase of change? That is possible, but one cannot say so definitely on the basis not of reality but of a poll.

According to the responses to this question, 33.3 percent of Algerians are still expressing disapproval of the suspension of the election process. That opinion therefore remains quite significant. It is rooted in the continuing

attraction of the Islamic movement, which still receives 27.4 percent of Algerian votes, and certainly also in circles close to the FFS and the FLN.

Of those polled, 28.2 percent expressed no opinion on the suspension of voting. How should that abstention be interpreted? At any rate and in all cases, there are always abstainers, and that, too, is a political choice.

Housing, Unemployment First

How do Algerians see the future of their country? What do they expect of it? In other words, what are the

citizens' concerns? The responses to the poll conducted by EL WATAN are revealing with respect to all the questions raised.

Will Algerians vote the next time?

Although a majority (over 50 percent) of those polled concerning the multiparty system said they definitely opposed it and over 13 percent said they were for it but not right away, the fact remains that most of the citizens polled (78 percent) said they would vote the next time.

Would you vote in the next elections?

Sex	Will vote next time		Will not vote next time		No answer		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Men	4,528,225	38.2	862,921	7.3	643,654	5.4	6,034,800	50.9
Women	4,721,611	39.8	372,088	3.1	721,551	6.1	5,814,799	49.1
Total	9,249,386	78.1	1,235,008	10.4	1,365,205	11.5	11,849,599	100.0

The act of voting is therefore accepted by the majority despite the disappointments apparently caused by the experience with the multiparty system in Algeria. And that acceptance is shared evenly by the two sexes, with a slightly higher percentage of women (39.8 percent, compared to 38.2 percent of the men).

Activities by the women's associations and certain political parties to promote voting by women, combined with restrictions on the use of proxies, seem to have had their effect on women's awareness, since housewives who said they would vote in the next elections represent 32.6 percent out of a total of 78 percent.

On the other hand, it should be pointed out that 10.4 percent of the citizens polled said they would not vote in the next elections. And 1 percent more (11.5 percent) did not answer the question.

On this question of people's intention to vote, attention should also be drawn to the influence of the illiterate, since they practically determine the outcome in every hypothetical case. They account for 42.1 percent out of the 78 percent saying they will participate in the balloting next time. The outcome will also be determined by young people, since they account for no less than 22.1 percent.

The question now is who the Algerians would like to see win if elections were held.

Young people and Illiterates

The democratic forces are apparently preferred by 50.2 percent of those polled. Projected nationwide, that percentage in favor of the democrats would involve more than 5 million citizens of voting age: 5,946,007 to be exact. Here again, the women significantly outnumber the men, since they account for 25.3 percent (over 3 million voters), compared to 24.8 percent of the men.

If another election is held, which group would you like to see win?

Sex	Democratic		Islamic		Other		No answer		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Men	2,942,418	24.8	1,748,489	14.8	403,168	3.4	940,725	7.9	6,034,800	50.9
Women	3,003,589	25.3	1,492,614	12.6	76,399	0.6	1,242,197	10.5	5,814,799	49.1
Total	5,946,007	50.2	3,241,103	27.4	479,567	4.0	2,182,922	18.4	11,849,599	100.0

Next comes the Islamic movement with 27.4 percent (3,241,103 voters). In this case we note a predominance of male voters (14.8 percent), compared to 12.6 percent in the case of the women. It seems, then, that in terms of votes, the total would be the same as in the first round of balloting in the legislative elections of 26 December 1991 (around 3 million).

On the other hand, the number of votes in favor of the democrats would tend to be higher.

Although not specified by name, the other political groups are preferred by barely 4 percent of the citizens, while 18.4 percent, representing over 2 million people, did not express an opinion.

Many young people between the ages of 18 and 24 years prefer the democratic forces (14.3 percent out of a total of 50.2 percent preferring the democrats), compared to 10.2 percent preferring the Islamic forces (out of a total Islamic vote of 27.4 percent). In this connection, it

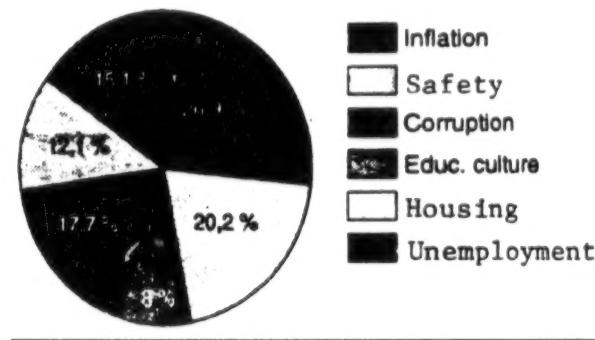
should be pointed out that the 18-24 age group numbers over 3 million people: 3,316,050 to be exact.

And contrary to all expectations, it is primarily the illiterates (25 percent, or 2,969,537) who express the wish to see the democrats win if there is another election. On the other hand, 16 percent of individuals with educational levels ranging from primary school to university (1,960,777 voters) chose the Islamic movement.

Unemployment, Housing, and Future

As was to be expected, unemployment is the biggest concern the citizens have, since 26.9 percent of those polled consider that the priority of priorities. This is an even more important concern for men (41.2 percent, or 4,879,047 individuals) than it is for women (39.8 percent, or 4,721,121 individuals).

Algerians' Concerns



Algerians' Concerns

Answer	Men		Women		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Unemployment:						
No	1,155,752	9.8	1,093,639	9.2	2,249,391	19.0
Yes	4,879,047	41.2	4,721,161	39.8	9,600,208	81.0
Housing:						
No	2,424,675	20.5	2,229,716	18.8	4,654,391	39.3
Yes	3,610,125	30.5	3,585,083	30.3	7,195,208	60.7
Education and culture:						
No	4,259,447	35.9	4,740,998	40.0	9,000,444	76.0
Yes	1,775,353	15.0	1,073,801	9.1	2,849,155	24.0
Combating corruption:						
No	2,617,054	22.1	2,897,493	24.5	5,514,547	46.5
Yes	3,417,745	28.8	2,917,307	24.6	6,335,052	53.5
Combating inflation:						
No	3,805,338	32.1	2,662,605	22.5	6,467,943	54.6
Yes	2,229,461	18.8	3,152,194	26.6	5,381,656	45.4
Restoring law and order:						
No	3,799,694	32.1	3,750,622	31.7	7,550,316	63.7
Yes	2,235,106	18.9	2,064,177	17.4	4,299,283	36.3

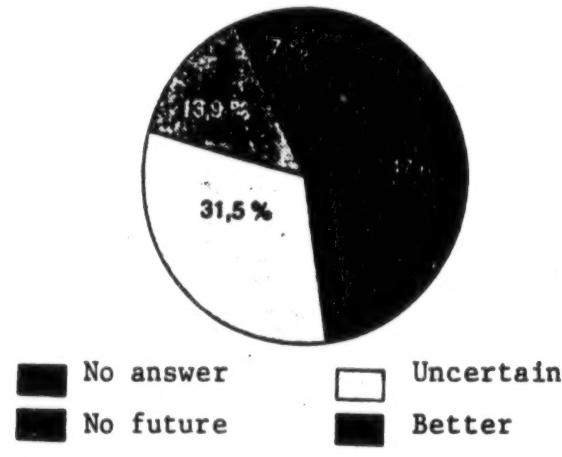
Housing is in second place (20.2 percent). As many women as men (30.3 percent and 30.5 percent respectively) feel that this is also a priority taking precedence over inflation, culture, and education.

Corruption, which with its new developments and scandals has long been in the news all over the country, was put in third place (17.8 percent) by those polled. It was primarily housewives and hourly and salaried employees (20.8 percent and 11 percent respectively of those answering yes) who stress the fight against corruption.

Inflation, which is experienced by the citizens daily, is in third [as published] place at 15.1 percent, although 54.6 percent of those polled said no when asked whether it was a priority. Apparently it is felt more by women (26.6 percent) than by men (18.8 percent).

At 12.1 percent, the restoration of law and order is in fourth [as published] place, although 63.7 percent of those polled answered no, while education and culture are in last place, being favored by only 8 percent. No fewer than 76 percent of those polled felt that this was not a priority.

How do you see
Algeria's future?



How do you see the country's future?

Respondent's politics	Better future		Uncertain future		No future		No answer	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Democratic	3,050,105	25.7	2,023,051	17.1	650,750	5.5	222,101	1.8
Islamic	1,471,324	12.4	936,532	7.9	643,677	5.4	189,569	1.6
Other	236,247	2.0	158,443	1.3	63,658	5.0	21,219	0.2
No answer	878,542	7.4	614,002	5.2	291,426	2.5	398,952	3.4
Total	5,636,219	47.6	3,732,028	31.5	1,649,512	13.9	831,841	7.0

But beyond those major concerns, 47.6 percent of Algerians see the future as being brighter. And 31.5 percent consider it uncertain, while 7 percent prefer not to express an opinion.

Of those in the democratic camp, 25.7 percent are hoping for a better future and 17.1 percent fear an uncertain future. Among the Islamists, on the other hand, 12.4 percent see a better future and 7.9 percent consider it rather uncertain.

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